

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time



As we recover from the darkness and isolation of lust addiction, we find that we need to make wholesale changes. We must live our life based on new principles if we are to live and love freely. In recovery, we slowly shed layers of self-centeredness and replace old patterns with what the Church considers four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

Prudence guides judgment based on sound reasoning and is gained by leaning on a core group of individuals that can relate to what we're going through, repeatedly emphasize new ideas, and reframe our lives with hope. As we acknowledge and seek the will of God, we become more in tune with the Spirit that guides our judgment.

Justice is the result of doing what's right in the face of our fallen nature. Making amends to the people we have harmed requires justice—not so that we can relieve ourselves of guilt but because we desire the well-being of the other.

Praying that our neighbor receives all the peace and serenity that we desire for ourselves is a gateway to justice, just as preparing to make amends seasons us for reconciliation. The search for justice includes asking God to remove whatever defects of character stand in the way of serving Him and others, especially if they become habitual.

Fortitude is a cardinal virtue that gives strength to persist through fear and difficulty. It reveals itself when we are tempted to take the easier, softer way in overcoming the root of our spiritual disease. Fortitude strengthens our commitment to recovery as the foundation upon which everything else in our life rests.

Temperance is a gift of recovery. Depending on the addiction, compulsion, or unhealthy attachment from which we seek healing, we may call it sobriety. In other cases, temperance may be seen as moderation, though many of us may have forfeited the ability to moderately lust. Temperance can be developed through seemingly small acts such as choosing to delay gratification or refraining from a second glance. When we practice temperance in other areas of our lives, the urges that fuel our sexual compulsions fade.

Reflection Questions

The four cardinal virtues contribute to an upright way of living that is strengthened and nurtured through the sacraments and the Twelve Steps. Penance, amends, and restorative justice shape the way we live and move forward with our lives. They build a foundation for freedom rooted in virtue rather than vice.

These four virtues underscore the theme of this Sunday's Gospel Reading as Jesus tells the story of a cunning steward. Jesus concludes the story with an important lesson:

The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon."

- Choose one of the four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) and describe how you've seen personal growth in that area.
- In this Sunday's Gospel Reading, Jesus declares, "You cannot serve both God and mammon." How can you relate?
- Share what's going on in your life today and relate it to an action, solution, or recovery principle.

Catholic in Recovery Resources Online

Visit catholicinrecovery.com for a variety of resources related to addiction recovery and the Catholic Church:

- Articles published weekly related to various types of addictions, the impact of addiction on families, practical application of the Twelve Steps and sacraments, and more
- Full directory of virtual and in-person meetings available
- Read testimonials of CIR community members
- Enroll in the Catholic in Recovery Novena
- Pre-order *The Catholic in Recovery Workbook*

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Amos 8:4-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 113:1-2, 4-6, 7-8

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13